

## Natural history

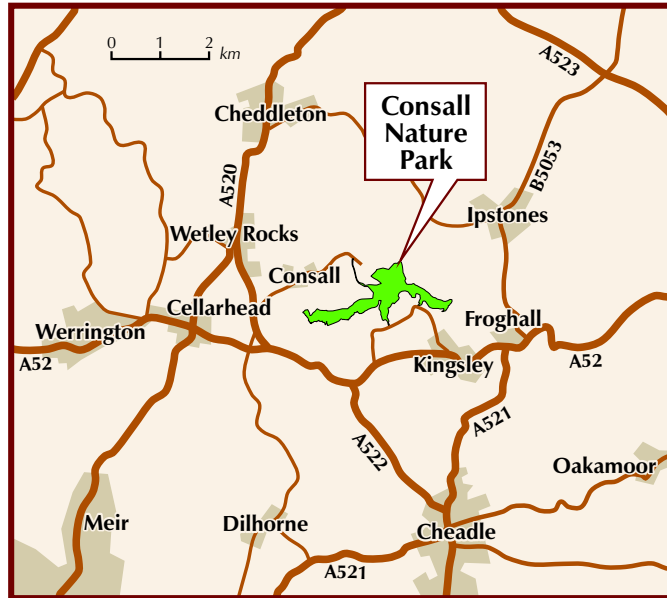
The major industrial activity in the valley ceased nearly a century ago though other areas have been reclaiming naturally for centuries so that a mosaic of woodland types and ages has arisen. Some areas of past spoil tipping have become recolonised by different trees (notably Birch and Ash) and shrubs as well as a more diverse ground flora which includes Dog's Mercury, Wild Garlic and Wood Anemone.

Some of the richest areas botanically are the wet flushes, these are alive with colour in the Spring, Marsh Marigold and Butterbur being in abundance.. Further habitat diversity is provided by largely unimproved grassland, the interesting Bilberry-rich heath on Far Kingsley Banks, and the pools and streams. The latter support amphibians such as Smooth and Palmate newts, as well as a range of dragonflies, damselflies, mayflies, stoneflies and other aquatic insects.

Overall, the Nature Park's seclusion and habitat diversity are reflected in a rich fauna, with a number of species of mammals and a large variety of butterflies. These include the uncommon Green Hairstreak and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Other insects such as hoverflies are well represented, and so too are the reptiles, with Grass Snakes being spotted regularly, during the summer, around the pools. Among the 70 or so species of bird noted to date are the relatively uncommon Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Woodcock and Tree Pipit, along with the full range of woodland songbirds. All three species of Woodpecker can be seen or more often heard, around the park. Also, Dippers and Kingfishers can often be observed feeding in the river or nearbystreams.

Consall Nature Park is adjacent to extensive reserves owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

## Location Map



Various publications regarding other country parks, picnic places, greenways and walking in Staffordshire are available from:

Rural County,  
Staffordshire County Council  
Wedgwood Building,  
Block A, Tipping Street  
Stafford,  
ST16 2DH  
Telephone (01785) 277284  
[www.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk)



Cover photograph courtesy of Ron Scholes.

Should you, or someone you know require it, this information can also be produced, on request, in large print and in other formats or languages other than English.



 Staffordshire  
County Council

## Introduction

Consall Nature Park is situated within the beautiful valley of the River Churnet.

It was opened in 1989 by Sir Derek Barber, Chairman of the Countryside Commission.

The majority of the park is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.) and here the emphasis is on nature conservation, whilst at the same time welcoming the public to enjoy the walks, fishing, and picnic facilities.

With this in mind visitors are asked for their help in protecting the beauty and wildlife of the park by :-

- Following the country code
- Keeping dogs on leads at all times
- Keeping to footpaths provided.

## Visitor Centre

Provides displays and exhibitions on the varied and dramatic past of the valley and its present natural history interests. There is a small shop area, selling leaflets and souvenirs throughout the summer (April - September). Toilet facilities are provided all year round, these include a baby changing unit, and there is easy access to facilities for the disabled.

## Education

The Nature Park is particularly suited for School visits, these can be adapted to suit various aspects of the National Curriculum. Arrangements for school visits can be made by telephoning:

**Consall Visitor Centre:**  
Wetley Rocks (01782) 550939 or  
**Head Ranger:**  
Ash Bank (01782) 302030.

## Facilities for the disabled

A disabled Radar Key operated Toilet is available at the visitor centre; - disabled parking is available at the bottom of the valley though spaces are rather limited.

## Walks

The site makes an excellent base for exploring the Churnet Valley along the network of Public Rights of Way or you can follow the waymarked routes which lead you to areas of interest and to pleasant views within the park itself.

### Green Walk

At a leisurely pace half an hour would suffice to circuit the ponds.

### Red Walk

This is a longer walk which takes approximately 1 hour. Stout footwear is recommended and steep gradients are encountered.

### White Walk

Approximately 1½ hours to walk this route. It has steep gradients - stout footwear will be required.

### Purple Walk

This is basically an extension of the white route, so allow an extra half an hour to the duration time. There are steep gradients on this walk, so it isn't for the faint hearted but the effort is rewarded with the spectacular views of Churnet Valley.

## General Information

As with National Parks, people live in and alongside Consall Nature Park. Slow and cautious driving is essential as is respect for their privacy. Signposting within the park will make it clear where the public are permitted to walk.

There are, within the park boundaries, a number of steep cliff faces. In order to avoid hazards keep to the paths on the marked routes. The nature park is not suitable for unsupervised children.

## History

There are references to ironworking in the Consall Valley from 1290 when extensive woodland felling provided charcoal for the primitive smelting processes.

By the mid 17th Century a forge was in operation at Consall, utilising the River Churnet as a source of power. At this time, all materials were transported, throughout the valley, using mules.

Towards the end of 18th Century smelting declined to be replaced mainly by ironstone mining. The industry brought the canal and the railway and denuded the valley of trees. 1,500 men worked the area at its peak and 30 barges a day transported the ironstone to Froghall. Such was the bright red dust of the stone that workers were known as "the Redmen".

The last mine to close, in 1923, was the Cherry Eye mine high up in Ruelow Wood, at its peak this produced nearly 1000 tonnes of ironstone per year.

# Ponsall Nature Park

**KEY**

- Area of Nature Park
- Other Woodland
- Parking
- Viewpoint
- Waymarked Trails
- Staffordshire Way
- RSPB Walks
- Other Public Footpath

0 100 200 300 Metres

